

## Confessions' of a Cuban Poet

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The Cuban poet Heberto Padilla was arrested in Cuba in March and released last month after "confessing" to wrongdoing and wrong thinking. (His treatment prompted sixty European and American intellectuals to write to Premier Fidel Castro to express shame and anger.) The text of Mr. Padilla's "confession" was distributed in New York by the Cuban Mission to the United Nations with the explanation that the poet had "admitted to counterrevolutionary activities and asked for an opportunity to expose and discuss his conduct publicly." This article is excerpted from the "confession":

I have meditated profoundly before deciding to write this letter. I am not doing so through fear of the inevitable and just consequences of my contemptible, well-known and demonstrated attitudes—demonstrated far beyond what I myself could ever have imagined possible. I am moved by a sincere desire to make amends, to compensate the Revolution for the harm I may have occasioned and to compensate myself spiritually. I may prevent others from losing themselves stupidly.

But, above all, I desperately want to be believed and my action not to be taken for cowardice, although I myself am overcome with shame at my own actions.

For many days I struggled with myself to make the decision to tell the truth. I did not even want my truth to be as it really was. I preferred my disguise, my appearances, my justifications, my evasions. I had become accustomed to living in a deceitful and subtle game. I did not dare to confess how ignoble, how unjust, how unworthy my position was: I really lacked courage to do so.

Under the disguise of the writer in revolt within a socialist society I hid the opposed to the Revolution, behind

the ostentations of the critical poet who paraded his sickly irony, the only thing I really sought was to leave constance of my counterrevolutionary hostility. Among both Cubans and foreigners I accused the revolution unjustly of the worst things. Among both Cubans and foreigners I discredited every one of the initiatives of the Revolution, striving to look like an intellectual who was an expert in problems I had no information neither knew anything about; and following this course I committed grave faults against the true intellectual's moral code, and what is worse, against the Revolution itself.

What I wanted was to call attention to myself, to profit from the scandal. I wanted to be the only writer with a political mind in Cuba, the only writer capable of confronting the revolutionary process and to impose my ideas. Hypocritically and contemptuously, I repeated the old theory that politics is too serious a matter to leave to the politicians.

I who had not achieved anything either before or after the Revolution, I wanted fame and looked for it along a road that could only lead to counter-revolution.

My egocentrism was growing by leaps and bounds. The B.B.C. of London did a long interview with me in color for a program dedicated to Cuban education and culture. A Canadian radio station sought me out for more interviews.

Because my vanity then had no limits I carried by disaffected political positions to heights I never should have scaled: to poetry. I was convinced that a poem which would represent a supposed criticism of the Revolution would awaken the interest of certain international circles: the cir-

cles of skepticism and hatred toward revolutions. That's how I came to write insidious and provocative poems which, under the clever appearance of dislocations because of the problems and demands of history, expressed no other thing than the temperament of the unbeliever, the cynic, a verse-maker trapped by his own moral and intellectual limitations.

I have been tremendously ungrateful, unjust with Fidel, and the deep repentance I feel for having acted that way motivates me to make amends for my cowardly and counterrevolutionary virulence.

When I have mentally reviewed the fragments I wrote, parts of the novel, I have felt extraordinary shame. It seems to me incredible that I could have thought that this sickly bundle of papers—containing all my bitterness—could have had some intellectual and human worth. Not only were they politically negative and deformed, not only did they reflect my ideological and counterrevolutionary vacillations, but they also expressed a profound disenchantment with life, with hope and the poetry of life. The man who wrote those pages was a man who was headed toward his own moral and physical destruction.

Only the vanity and petulance of considering myself worthy of all honors could lure me into such a plan—one that as always was linked to the outside world, to the purpose of giving my prestige a boost in the foreign periodicals, editorial and public. And among my most serious mistakes is precisely this one: to think that I, a Cuban, could live a double life: on the one hand vegetate like a parasite in the shadow of the Revolution, while on the other cultivate my literary popularity abroad at the cost of the Revolution and helped by its enemies.